



Key Findings from the Summer of Listening Final Report November 2013



Acknowledgements

The Plymouth Fairness Commissioners would like to thank all those that engaged in the Summer of Listening events, and shared their thoughts and ideas. This report draws heavily upon the perceptions and experiences reported to us by the general public and community members, and would not have been possible without their participation.



Contents:

A Message from the Chair	1
Introduction	1
Collecting the Evidence	3
Phase 1: Scoping Stage	3
Phase 2: Summer of Listening	3
Approach to Reporting/ What Next?	4
Theme 1: Helping Individuals and Family	6
What is Perceived as Unfair	8
What is perceived as Fair	11
Theme 2: Creating Stronger Communities	13
What is perceived as Unfair	15
What is perceived as Fair	19
Theme 3: Growing the Local Economy	22
What is perceived as Unfair	24
What is perceived as Fair	26
Communities of Interest Case Studies	28
Disabled People	28
Military Families	29
Older People	29
Young People	30
Commissioner Stories	31
Access to Mental Health Services	31
Experience of Abuse on Account of Learning Disabilities	31
Support for the Homeless	32
The Impact of Poor Housing on Health	32
Activities for those with Learning Disabilities	33
Annexes	
A1: Organisations that Responded to the Initial Call for Evidence	34
A2: Organisations Attending Themed Meetings	35
A3: Organisations that responded to the E-Survey	36
A4: Plymouth Fairness Commissioners	37
A5: Summer of Listening Timeline of Events	38

Introduction

The Plymouth Fairness Commission, which launched in April 2013, was set up independently to help make the city a fairer place to live and work.

Chaired by Dame Suzi Leather, Commissioners were selected for their professional expertise and skills, and their personal commitment to fairness in Plymouth. They include individuals from the police, health, private companies, charities, social enterprises and community groups. All commissioners, including the Chair, are unpaid.

The Commission aims to collect information, ideas and evidence, and provide recommendations for how the Council and other public bodies should use their roles and influences, individually and collectively, to reduce inequalities and increase the perception and experience of fairness within the local economy and local communities in ways which are both effective and sustainable.

A critical success factor for the Plymouth Fairness Commission is to ensure that local residents and community members have the opportunity to share their perceptions and experiences of inequality in the city, and to recommend practical ideas for tackling them.

The Commission has engaged with local residents, businesses, professional organisations, academics and community groups through a range of 'Summer of Listening' events and activities. The views gathered through this process will be used to shape a set of recommendations that will be presented to city leaders in March 2014, in order to influence real change.

A message from the Chair



Photograph: Graham Turner, The Guardian

This report is about what people in Plymouth think is fair and unfair about living in the city. It is a pretty sobering read. The major dimensions of unfairness people have spoken about are perhaps not that surprising: the cost of living crisis, poor quality housing, the marked difference in life chances for young people depending on where they come from. It is also revealing about the connections - or lack of them - between people. Difficult physical links, especially for those with disabilities, high bus prices, poor access to shops and health services. The lack of employment opportunities for young people. Other important but less tangible things have emerged too. The increasing vulnerability of many, people feeling they cannot take control of their own lives through communal activities or influence local decisions.

The economic basis of unfairness was clear, the decline in living standards is certainly hurting many. Commissioners heard of young families struggling to feed their children in the school holidays. We heard of young people unable to take apprenticeships because of the high cost of bus fares.

We also heard of companies struggling to survive, frustrated that they cannot generate more local demand for their goods and services.

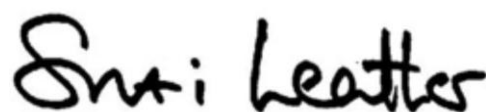
But much of the unfairness is relational, to do with how we live together and regard each other. Perhaps this reflects the increasing body of evidence which connects economic inequality and social breakdown. We heard about abuse and attacks on disabled people, on refugees and asylum seekers - odious crimes which mar the dignity of us all. We heard of crippling loneliness and isolation, especially but not exclusively amongst older people. We heard of young carers whose own schools had no idea of the burden they are carrying day in day out. We heard of the inevitable breakdown in mental health and the difficulties that people have waiting for services when they feel desperate.

The things we heard about fairness are also important, revealing what people notice and value - positive approaches to anti-bullying, opportunities for adult learning, investment in new social housing, the importance of chances to volunteer, police responses to antisocial behaviour. All this was highlighted to us - and shows that such changes can be made, make a difference and are welcomed.

The Fairness Commission, designed to provoke change, was born of a commitment from the city to address unfairness and inequality. Having reflected on the findings in this report, we will shortly be announcing the issues we will focus on in making our final recommendations in spring 2014 to

enable the city to respond positively helping individuals and families, creating stronger communities and growing the city's economy.

I would like to thank everyone who has given us their views and ideas. Our approach to capturing the perceptions and experiences of local residents and community members has been as inclusive as possible. This has taken time and effort and as well as thanking everyone who has taken part I would finally like to thank all my Commission colleagues who have so generously and devotedly given up their time and energy to help build up this composite picture of fairness and unfairness in Plymouth today.



Dame Suzi Leather

Collecting the Evidence

The work of the Fairness Commission, to date, has had two distinct phases, with the first informing the second.

Phase 1: Scoping Stage

Following the launch of the Commission, a statistical review was undertaken to provide a socio-economic profile of Plymouth relating to broad themes of fairness such as health inequalities, education, housing, and employment. The purpose of this **Initial Presentation of Evidence** was to ensure that the themes and areas of focus in the subsequent stages of Fairness Commission activity were prioritised against identified need, and underpinned by robust and defensible assumptions.

An initial **Call for Evidence**, informed by the statistical review, was launched in May 2013. The aim of the Call for Evidence was to identify any initial themes of fairness and unfairness based on the views and experiences of those that live and work in Plymouth. The Call invited organisations and individuals to submit written responses against a set of broad questions ranging from what is fair and unfair about life in Plymouth to what the people of Plymouth could do to help each other live fairer lives.

In total, 50 submissions, encompassing 25 individual and 25 local organisational responses were received from the Call for Evidence. This highlighted direct experiences of inequality and unfairness issues. This evidence, along with expert knowledge provided by the commissioners themselves and a review of the reports produced by other Fairness Commissions, was used to develop three broad themes and associated lines of enquiry. These themes and lines of enquiry were further developed to produce the detailed lines of questioning (Table 1).

Phase 2: Summer of Listening

Following the Call for Evidence, the Commission launched the **Summer of Listening**; a series of events to collect further views, ideas and evidence from a variety of sources, based on the three broad themes.

The aim of the Summer of Listening was to ensure that Plymouth residents and communities had a chance to share their views. To date, this has taken place through 7 types of events, each designed to reflect the underlying principles of engagement and openness:

1. Walkabouts: A series of 'Walkabouts' were conducted by Commissioners in 6 different areas of the city: Barne Barton, Devonport, Eggbuckland, North Prospect, Stonehouse, and Whiteleigh. The purpose of the Walkabouts were for Commissioners to familiarise themselves with the local area, and to hear directly residents' views and experiences of fairness and inequality.

2. Satellite Meetings: Commissioners attended a range of meetings and events held by various groups in the city to help raise awareness of the Fairness Commission and to gather evidence and views around the three broad themes. A total of 27 meetings were held with a range of organisations including Age UK, MIND Mental Health Plymouth, Royal Marine/ Navy Forum, Young Carers, and Access Plymouth.

3. Listening Events: A series of Listening Events across the city were arranged, which engaged with 70 people. During these events, members of the public could 'drop-in' to meet some of the Commissioners, share the issues that affect them, and put forward suggestions to make Plymouth a fairer place.

4. Street Survey: SERIO, a research unit based at Plymouth University, collected views on behalf of the Fairness Commission from 151 Plymouth residents through face-to-face street surveys. The Street Surveys gathered views on issues of fairness and unfairness in Plymouth and recommendations for improvement or change. The Street Surveys were conducted in the following locations: Stoke Village, Mutley, Royal Parade, Crownhill, and Plympton Ridgeway.

5. E-Survey: An E-Survey was emailed by SERIO, on behalf of the Fairness Commission, to over 1,500 organisations in the city inviting them to share their perceptions and experiences of fairness and unfairness in Plymouth. In total, 64 detailed responses were received.

6. Expert Presentations:

The Commissioners convened 3 themed presentations, inviting experts to present on topics such as the role of public funding and the negative impact of inequality for all members of society. The presentations provided further contextual information to the issues of fairness and unfairness.

7. Select Committee Events:

The commissioners facilitated 7 panel-led discussions between professionals, academics and the public. These presented an opportunity to interrogate experts on themes including financial inclusion, mental health, food, skills and business, housing, dementia and isolation and local procurement.

Note: A table of Summer of Listening events, held and planned, is presented in Annex 5. At the time of writing, further listening events were being planned by the Fairness Commission. Some of the key issues still to be fully explored include education and ethnicity.

Approach to Reporting

This first report from the Plymouth Fairness Commission brings together data gathered through the Call for Evidence, and the 'Summer of Listening' events.

Whilst all views shared with Commissioners and the research team are valuable in shaping emerging findings, it was important that this report reflected the weight of community opinion relating to each nominated issue.

The topic guides used to collect data for the Call for Evidence and the Street and E-Surveys were similar in content, and provided information that could be quantified (counted). Through specialist software, the researchers were able to establish the number of times a particular topic was identified, and therefore get a sense of the weight of opinion.

This technique allowed the team to identify the top 3 most commonly mentioned areas of unfairness and fairness across the Call for Evidence, Street and E-Surveys, which has been used as the basis for this report. Whilst still of interest, it should be noted that issues of fairness were much less commonly reported than those of unfairness.

The data from the remaining Summer of Listening events was then analysed and used to add depth of insight to the fairness issues identified.

What Next?

This report will be followed by a Position Statement Interim Report later in 2013, which will incorporate the views and response of commissioners to the Summer of Listening, and identifying the key areas of concern. A final report covering agreed

recommendations and actions will be published in March 2014.

For further information, including all reports and documentation, please visit www.plymouthfairnesscommission.co.uk

Table 1: Detailed Lines of Questioning

Broad Theme	Key Line of Enquiry	Line of Questioning
Theme 1: Helping Individuals and Families	Finance	Such as the cost of living, wages and employment
	Housing	Including the quality of available accommodation and its cost
	Pre-school and school education	Such as the performance of young people and the role of schools in the community
	Adult learning	Such as apprenticeships and support with literacy and numeracy
Theme 2: Creating Stronger Communities	Access to goods and services	Such as good public transport links, access to food at a price people can afford, and access to health care such as dentists and doctor's surgeries
	Community activities	Such as opportunities to volunteer and to become involved in local decision making
	Issues of loneliness and inclusion	Such as the need to feel respected, a sense of belonging, and being part of a community
	Abusive and anti-social behaviour	Ranging from substance misuse to feeling unsafe in your own home
Theme 3: Growing the Local Economy	Supporting the Plymouth economy to grow	Such as through opportunities for employment, parking issues in the city, and shopping facilities that meet local needs

Source: Plymouth Fairness Commission, 2013

Theme 1: Helping Individuals and Family



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The cost of living is still going up but people who are at the bottom of society are getting less money. The cuts are definitely affecting those most in need of help first

**Theme 1:
Helping
Individuals and
Families**

Summary of Key Findings



The top 3 most commonly identified areas of unfairness and fairness under Theme 1 Helping Individuals and Families have been summarised below.

Top 3 Unfair

Finance	Financial issues were identified as the most common area of unfairness under Theme 1. More specifically, the low wages in Plymouth compared to the high cost of living with particular cost areas including council tax, water, energy and housing. The personal impact of unemployment and benefit cuts were frequently mentioned across all of the Summer of Listening events.
Housing	Housing was the second most commonly identified area of unfairness under this theme, and was raised across all Summer of Listening events. Issues included a lack of affordable homes to buy, high rents and a lack of suitable social housing . The severe impact of the 'bedroom tax' was highlighted as was difficulty in finding private rented housing and the social housing allocation system.
Education	Education was the third most frequently mentioned issue of unfairness under this theme, but did not receive comments on the scale of Finance and Housing. Areas of perceived unfairness included the differences in the quality of provision across neighbourhoods, the allocation system , the 11+ system and a difference in attainment by area .

Top 3 Fair

Education	Education issues were cited most often in this theme including the positive approaches to anti-bullying, equality of access and the good standard of teaching in Plymouth schools.
Adult Learning	The opportunity to access adult learning was the second most commonly identified area of fairness. Feedback through the Summer of Listening events indicated that some people find opportunities are plentiful and improving, with good support for individuals .
Housing	Whilst housing was mentioned less frequently than Education and Adult Learning, it was the third most commonly cited area of fairness. More specifically, comments related to the social housing allocation system and the investment in new build properties to tackle the problems of poor quality housing.

Other Emerging Themes	In addition to the top 3 areas of fairness and unfairness, there was also concern regarding the lack of support for those with a mental health condition , echoing feedback received under Theme 2. The vulnerability of some older people was also raised as an issue of unfairness, particularly with regard to digital exclusion and feelings of isolation.
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Theme 1: Helping Individuals and family

What is Perceived as Unfair?

1. Finance

Under this theme, financial issues were most commonly identified as being unfair with over half of all respondents to the Street and E-Survey highlighting this topic. More specifically, the low wages in Plymouth compared to the high cost of living were commonly mentioned, with particular cost areas including council tax, water, energy and housing.

The impact of financial difficulties cuts across all the other issues raised whether housing, health, education or access to services.

“Poorer and less privileged communities are particularly affected by these issues of unfairness and inequality. For example a child born in Devonport today will live, on average, 12 years less than a child born in Widewell” E-Survey

Some of the respondents to the Street Survey had personally experienced the financial difficulties of unemployment and the worry of benefit cuts which impacts on the whole family. The lack of suitable employment in Plymouth was a key concern for many individuals. Specific reference was made to being unable to find a job despite being qualified, a lack of opportunities to support people back into employment, and the need for more full time jobs.

Financial issues cut across all groups but were perceived to have most impact on more vulnerable groups such as older people, lone parents, families of disabled children, younger people and families on

low wages. The recession, together with benefit cuts and reduced funding for support organisations, has clearly increased the pressure on some groups of people.

“Many of our parents have children that are coming up to age 16 when their eligibility for Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments will be reassessed for the first time. Under the new rules, it is likely that a significant number of our children will have their eligibility revoked or reduced. Because such benefits are “gateway” benefits that unlock other support such as Carers’s Allowance, the impact of losing DLA/PIP will have a catastrophic effect on many people’s household finances, driving many into poverty, debt and despair” Your Child, Your Voice - Call for Evidence

The Financial Inclusion Select Committee focused on the issues around unequal access to financial services. They highlighted that people on lower incomes have limited access to financial services that many in society take for granted. Using high interest credit sources such as catalogue credit and ‘payday loans’ can quickly become unmanageable and lead to spiralling debt and subsequent stress.

The walkabout in Devonport also raised issues around local people finding it difficult to access local advice, especially benefits advice. While local provision was available the demand was too high for the current levels offered.

Local Credit Unions attending the Financial Inclusion Select Committee indicated that they can act as an alternative, safe, reliable source of financial services through, for example, offering affordable loans, help and guidance. It was felt that there is an opportunity to strengthen Credit Unions in Plymouth through a targeted approach to increasing Credit Union membership,

promoted by employers and service providers.

“... I know of families and have experienced myself the challenges in existing on a low wage and having the guts and motivation to keep trying even though the work you do is not being paid enough to live anything but the bare needs” E-Survey

“The cost of living is still going up but people who are at the bottom of society are getting less money. The cuts are definitely affecting those most in need of help first. So there’s a growing inequality, and no trickle-down effect like the government tells us about and that is unfair” E-Survey

2. Housing

Housing emerged as a key area of unfairness in Plymouth and was highlighted in all the Summer of Listening events. Issues included a lack of affordable homes, the existence of sub-standard accommodation, and a lack of suitable social housing. The cost of council tax charges and the bedroom tax were also viewed as unfair, especially in the light of other high costs associated with owning and/ or renting a property. These issues were raised in a number of different areas of the City including Stonehouse, Eggbuckland, Prince Rock, North Prospect, Crownhill and Weston Mill.

The new centralised system, whereby all Council and Housing Association homes available to rent are advertised and allocated centrally, has resulted in some families feeling that they will never be able to access social housing. Further, some landlords from the private rented market were reported to be unwilling to let to anyone accessing benefits as part of their

family income. Young people raised the issues of the lack of appropriate housing when presenting as homeless and how the system in Plymouth is potentially treating them unfairly. Supporting organisations highlighted how stressful young people found issues around housing and that problems were often left unresolved for long periods of time.

The issue of poor quality accommodation for military families was also raised at the Satellite Meeting. People were unsure who had responsibility for improvements, the MOD or Plymouth City Council, and were left without a clear route for taking action. Similarly, the walkabout in North Prospect highlighted issues around the size and quality of some new build properties.

The Select Committee on Housing noted that those on low incomes in Plymouth inhabit the poorest quality housing and that, whilst average income is low, rental prices are comparatively high. They also highlighted that while some tenants may feel fearful of raising concerns with landlords, some landlords also experience tenants damaging their property. The new investment in building student housing was perceived to be helping to balance the private rented market.

“There is insufficient housing of various types to meet those in most need and that poor quality housing still affects life chances of the young” E-Survey

“Pensioners living in private accommodation that they can ill afford due to capping of Housing benefit. Some properties are substandard and not suitable for people with health issues” Individual Submission - Call for Evidence

Walkabout: North Prospect

This walkabout focused on housing issues; the size of the new social housing, the impact of the re-building programme on the community and the changes in the housing allocation process.

- One of the main concerns was the re-building of houses and the cost and upkeep of the new properties, which on the surface appeared impressive, but were in fact small compared with the previous housing.
- Other views included the unfairness of the bidding process for social housing. The perception was that under the old system, the likelihood of reaching the top of the list was greater than it is now.
- Previously different Housing Associations specialised in working with distinct groups such as young people or single parents. Now there is one centralised list, it was felt to be more difficult for some people to get access to social housing.
- Residents raised the lack of open space for children to play in and not being able to afford activities on a rainy day as issues of unfairness. Although the play area at Central Park was popular, it was always very busy.



3. Education

Education was the third most frequently mentioned issue of unfairness cited within this theme. Interestingly it was also most often highlighted as a fair issue in interviews, suggesting that perception depends on the individual circumstances of people. The areas which were considered unfair were the allocation system and the difference in the quality of education in different areas. Some respondents fed back that the selective 11+ system in Plymouth is unfair and creates a culture of unfairness in the education system. The difference in educational attainment by area was also raised in the E-Survey with children in more deprived areas perceived to have a lower level of educational achievement.

Some young people in military families experienced a lack of understanding by pupils and teachers of the emotional impact of parental absence, disruptions to family life and the impact of watching news reports about conflicts. The lack of clarity about the

rules on whether military families can have their holidays during term time was also noted.

*“Education in Plymouth I think doesn't set people up very well for jobs once they leave school, and so is doing them a disservice”
Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged, 65+,
Stoke Village*

“Several special schools have closed down and their pupils 'mainstreamed' when they are not able to cope with mainstream school demands. Support for these children in my opinion has only increased in one area in Plymouth” E-Survey

The lack of appropriate schools for children who are unable to cope with mainstream schooling was also raised. It was commented that the closing down of several special schools and moving the children to mainstream schools was not working for some young people.

One of the Satellite Meetings with young people found that some were disappointed with the quality of their education. They felt they had left school with insufficient knowledge and skills. The Select Committee on Skills and Business strengthened this finding by highlighting that many employers find young people are not ready for work. They also noted that due to funding cuts, effective career advice has been reduced both inside and outside educational establishments.

“The ‘selective’ system of schooling is a fundamental barrier to equality of opportunity. This distorts data for other schools and impacts on individuals within those establishments. It does not help to create a culture of inclusivity” E-Survey

Other Emerging Themes of Unfairness

Mental health issues and the lack of support for those who most need it was highlighted as unfair across the events. There was particular concern that as services and benefits are cut, more individuals are left vulnerable putting additional pressure on their families¹. Expert witness feedback to the Mental Health Select Committee also indicated that vulnerable adults in the city could be at risk of being exploited through, for example, prostitution and drug abuse.

“MIND (Mental Health Charity) lost 50% of funding and has to lay people off. Plymouth has a much lower than average spend on mental health” Commissioner Summary

The vulnerability of some older people was also raised across the Summer of Listening events. There was concern that older age

groups are generally neglected in Plymouth. The key areas of concern included digital exclusion, low-levels of interaction with other generations, and social isolation. Health concerns of older people were also highlighted.



What is Perceived as Fair?

1. Education

Education was the most often cited area of fairness under Theme 1 across the different methods throughout the Summer of Listening. Particular aspects of education singled out for praise were positive approaches to anti-bullying, equality of access and the good standard of teaching across the city. Parents commented that they felt there was a range of high quality educational opportunities across the city ensuring that children get a good start in life.

“Children from the estate seem to get a good level of education, even though they aren’t wealthy or anything like that” Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 55-64, Stoke Village

“There seem to be some good opportunities for individuals and families in terms of facilities and educational establishment” E-Survey

¹ Further reflection on issues around mental health is presented under Theme 2

2. Adult learning

Adult learning was cited with respondents commenting that opportunities for adult learning are plentiful and improving. Organisations also commented that the good level of support for adult learners was having a positive impact on addressing issues of unemployment.

“Adult education opportunities in the area are good. It’s easy to get on them if you want and there are lots of opportunities to learn new skills too” Male Street Survey respondent, Aged 16-25, Stoke

“I get a lot of flyers through the post about adult education, so it seems like there are a lot of opportunities if you want them” Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 16-25, Stoke Village

3. Housing

Although mentioned less frequently than Education and Adult Learning, some aspects of Housing were also singled out as examples of fairness. The main issues commented on were the social housing allocation system and the number of new houses being built which would tackle the problems of poor quality housing.

“Accommodation within the city seems to be very good, and it seems that people aren’t discriminated against even in the deprived areas of the city” Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 16-25, Crownhill

“Social housing providers seem well motivated and committed to a broad range of support for their residents” E-Survey

Theme 2: Creating Stronger Communities



““

Change is forced and not community led. Therefore, local people are less likely to take ‘ownership’ of change and participate, in such as ‘it’s going to happen anyway’

Theme 2: Creating Stronger Communities

Summary of Key Findings



The top 3 most commonly identified areas of unfairness and fairness under Theme 2 Creating Stronger Communities have been summarised below.

Top 3 Unfair

Access to Goods and Services

Access to goods and services was identified as the most common area of unfairness under Theme 2. Respondents were particularly passionate about the **high cost of public transport** in the city; **access to healthcare and dentistry**; and **affordable healthy food**. The Satellite Meetings also revealed particular concern around **access to mental health and rehabilitation services**; and **leisure activities for disabled people and certain ethnic groups**.

Abusive and Antisocial Behaviour

The second most commonly identified area of unfairness under this theme was abusive and antisocial behaviour. Feedback was commonly focused on the negative impact on residents of **alcohol and drug-related abusive and anti-social behaviour**. **Racism and discrimination** were also identified as issues for the city, ranging from verbal abuse towards asylum seekers, to discrimination against those living with HIV.

Community Activities

Barriers to involvement in community activities was the third most frequently mentioned area of unfairness. Although community activities were identified as being positive in supporting interaction, residents felt that there were **limited opportunities for community engagement**, and that they **lacked clear routes for participation** in local matters and decision making.

Top 3 Fair

Access to Goods and Services

Access to goods and services was also identified as the fairest area of focus under Theme 2, indicating how divided responses were to this issue. Some respondents placed emphasis on **good healthcare provision**, and the **availability and affordability of public transport schemes**. The Walkabouts also found examples of communities working together to enhance access to goods and services such as basic food supplies.

Community Activities

The **breadth of volunteering and citizen engagement opportunities** across Plymouth was the second most commonly identified area of fairness. Feedback also indicated support for schemes that give local people the power to influence **community improvement programmes**, which also help to build confidence.

Abusive and Antisocial Behaviour

Whilst acknowledging the existence of abusive and anti-social behaviour, a number of respondents felt that **issues are dealt with promptly** by either the Police or Police Community Support Officers. The **positive response to abusive and anti-social behaviour** was the third most commonly mentioned fairness example.

Other Emerging Themes

In addition to the above, **health inequalities and obesity** emerged as an issue of unfairness, and this was reflected in responses from several organisations.

Theme 2: Creating Stronger Communities

What is Perceived as Unfair?

1. Access to Goods and Services

A number of respondents to the Street Surveys and E-Surveys were passionate about the unfairness associated with this subtheme. More specifically, this related to the perceived high cost of public transport in the city; and poor access to healthcare, dentistry and affordable healthy food. Groups deemed to be particularly affected by unfairness in this sub-theme were those living in perceived areas of deprivation.

"Although the doctors are good, the waiting list to get an appointment at my surgery is 3 weeks, which means I'm usually over my ailment by the time I can get to an appointment" Female Street Survey Respondent, Aged 45-54, Crownhill

More detailed feedback from the Satellite Meetings underlined a particular concern around access to mainstream leisure activities for disabled people and certain ethnic groups.

For example, one representative from a national voluntary sector organisation with a base in Plymouth commented that residents with learning disabilities are not eligible to access leisure activities for those with physical disability. In some cases, membership of mainstream leisure groups is also made difficult on account of their disability. Representatives from a city-based mosque felt that some amenities, such as swimming pools, should have separate gender activities and availability.

The Mental Health Select Committee and Satellite Meetings also identified themes of

unfairness in terms of accessibility to mental health and rehabilitation services. Expert witness feedback outlined a lack of resource, indicating that the lead-in time for referrals for children and adolescents requiring access to mental health services could be between 3 and 6 months.

"There is no proper infrastructure to address [adult mental health] needs or to provide services to all of these people - particularly those who may be too ill for the GP service and not severe enough to engage with secondary services. This unfairness is rife - statutory services do not fund services that are not so specific, and the voluntary/charity sector cannot fund the services because access to funding streams is diminishing as the competition to access the little pots of money increases" Plymouth Mental Health Network - Call for Evidence

Transport-related feedback from the E-Survey and Street Survey was predominantly focused on the cost of public transport. Views gathered through other Summer of Listening events highlighted concerns around inadequate provision of late night buses; the poor availability of transport for those with mobility issues; and the stipulation that disabled peoples' and pensioners' bus passes can only be used after 9:30am, all of which were deemed unfair.

Other issues raised through the Satellite Meetings included increased costs of leisure activities; limited access to gender neutral toilets and changing rooms that the transsexual and transgender population can use without fear of discrimination; and mobility problems and inhibited access experienced by disabled people and the frail such as shops without ramps, limited aisle space, the poor condition of some

pavements, and the cobbled surface in the West End of the city.

Walkabout: Devonport

The walkabout in Devonport focused on the need for accessible information advice, especially about benefits. One resident referred to: *'not having enough money to live on; and not easily being able to find out about your entitlement to more money'*.

- Residents wanted advice to be accessible locally so they could avoid expensive bus fares. They had also found long telephone queues when trying to contact the CAB.
- Although residents can access information from the Routeways Centre, increasing demand makes it extremely difficult to keep up with the needs of the local people.



2. Abusive and Antisocial Behaviour

Abusive and anti-social behaviour emerged as a significant area of focus under the creating stronger communities theme. More specifically, feedback to the Summer of Listening events suggested that alcohol and drug-related abusive and antisocial behaviour were prevalent in Plymouth, which impacts negatively on residents.

The Satellite Meetings, which provided an opportunity to explore this subtheme in more detail, reported concern amongst some attendees regarding: the presence of drug selling and abuse in some areas; residents feeling unsafe in their own home; and parents unable to let their children play outside for fear of criminal activity.

"Anti-social behaviour tends to stem from the drinking culture that exists in Plymouth. The council needs to look at the problems that exist that are forcing people to drink so much and cause trouble, because at the moment it seems like youngsters are choosing to drink a lot for some reason or another" Female Street Survey Respondent, Aged 55-64, Crownhill



In particular, a number of residents from the neighbourhoods of Stonehouse, King Street, Laira and Cattedown requested enhanced CCTV coverage to combat abusive and anti-social behaviour in their area.

Reflecting on the root causes for the abusive and antisocial behaviour experienced, resident and community group views suggested that racism and discrimination are common catalysts. This ranged from verbal abuse to asylum seekers, discrimination against those living with HIV, and discrimination on the basis of religion and sexual orientation.



“Racism and abuse in Plymouth is hugely prevalent and massively under-reported. So not only are asylum seekers under a huge strain from the circumstances that led them to flee their homes and families, and stressed by the legal processes of claiming asylum, but day-to-day they face abuse and racism. The young men in particular have said they are called names and shouted at around two to three times a day. This is the undercurrent above which more frightening and life-changing physical attacks have occurred. Plymouth could definitely do more about this”
Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support - Call for Evidence

“Many individuals are the victim of hate crime, yet don’t report the incidences that occur for fear of either not being believed, not taken seriously, and repeat victimisation”
E-Survey

3. Community Activities

Generally speaking, respondents across the Summer of Listening events were supportive of community engagement activities, perceiving them to have a positive role in supporting social and community interaction. However, a number of barriers were identified, both in terms of the prevalence of local opportunities, and the level of bureaucracy involved in becoming a volunteer, which were felt to be unfair.

Feedback from the E-Survey, Street Survey and Call for Evidence indicated perceived limited opportunities for community engagement in decision making and a lack of opportunities to volunteer. In particular, residents felt that they lacked clear routes for increased community ownership and participation in local matters, and were constantly removed from a democratic decision making process regarding community issues.

“Change is forced and not community led. Therefore, local people are less likely to take ‘ownership’ of change and participate, in such as ‘it’s going to happen anyway’”
Individual Submission - Call for Evidence

"[It is important] For residents to have a safe and understanding platform and space to bring their concerns to, and for those concerns to be listened to and dealt with sensitively, appropriately, and in a timely manner" Eddystone Trust - Call for Evidence

The Summer of Listening events also found that whilst some residents would in principle be willing to become more involved in community activities through, for example, volunteering or decision making, their opportunities are limited by bureaucracy or the practicalities of balancing involvement with existing commitments.

"There is too much red tape to volunteering, such as risk assessments and CRB forms" Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 26-34, Stoke

"Organisations complain that particular 'types' of people do not engage or want to get involved, yet their structures and behaviours can be exclusive or inappropriate - if you want to get women involved in decision making, why hold meetings in the evening without offering carer/childcare support, or when you do, complain about the cost of doing so (making women feel undermined or not supported)" E-Survey

Reflecting on levels of participation in community activities, views gathered through the Satellite Meetings indicated a lack of confidence amongst residents to access community cohesion initiatives and suggested that more events could be held to encourage greater community spirit across the City such as, for example, the recently held Pride in the Park.

"Those with disabilities find themselves being treated unfairly in the City of Plymouth because they are underrepresented in positions of decision making and power. All Plymouth services should seek to ensure best practice and make sure that strategic boards recruit disabled people and/or disability advocates and listen to their views and needs. It should be unacceptable to deliver any service where the service users have not been consulted about or involved in defining and configuring that service" Your Child, Your Voice - Call for Evidence

Related to the sub-theme of community activities, there was a perception amongst some that Plymouth lacked meeting places. For example, feedback from the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Satellite Meeting indicated the limited number of places to meet (particularly those that are not pubs or bars), which can restrict levels of contact and socialisation. A lack of sociable spaces was also highlighted through the Satellite Meeting with young people who felt they lacked a place where they can meet their friends.

Walkabout: Whitleigh

The walkabout focused on the community spirit and the recent improvements in Whitleigh.

- Whitleigh had a strong sense of community coupled with a well-maintained neighbourhood. This was credited to the work of the Neighbourhood Manager, Neighbourhood Warden and Parent Support Advisor. As a result of a recent Lottery grant, the local area will be even more enhanced with the potential development of a new community space. However, the absence of a local youth centre was a concern raised by local residents.
- There was still a perception that there is an issue with drug and alcohol induced abusive behaviour, especially in local public spaces, and outside shops such as the chemists.
- Residents commented on the poor state of both Plymouth bus and train stations and felt it reflected poorly on Plymouth as a destination.



Other Emerging Themes of Unfairness

Health also emerged as an issue of unfairness. The statistical evidence for Plymouth highlights health inequalities as a key concern and this was reflected in the responses from organisations. It was less of an issue for individuals, however this could be partly that people do not always see health as an issue of inequality. Organisations argued that poor health impacts across all other areas whether education, employment, or engagement in society or housing.

"In general terms it is believed that there are far too many wider determinants of health which negatively impact on the mental health and well-being of Plymouth people. The following list is not exhaustive: unemployment; low paid employment; benefit claims; homelessness/temporary housing and other housing issues; deprivation; crime and domestic violence; and drug and alcohol abuse" NotEDuk – Call for Evidence

It was also reported that there are high levels of obesity in the city, particularly in the more deprived areas and amongst young people. Meanwhile, the Food Select Committee heard from Plymouth Food Bank that there has been an increase in families with children under 5 accessing support from the Food Bank and that demand is particularly high during the school holidays.

What is Perceived as Fair?

1. Access to Goods and Services

Access to goods and services was the most commonly cited fairness issue under Theme 2. This was exemplified by good healthcare provision, including healthy eating schemes, and the availability and affordability of public transport schemes.

“There is a huge community spirit here with the residents we met (and of course they are a selected group) being very proud of being in Whittleigh and wanting to stay living there. They felt safe (on the whole) and happy with their environment” Feedback from a Commissioner following a Walkabout in Whittleigh

On a more local level, the Walkabouts found examples of cohesive communities with residents and volunteers working together to enhance access to goods and services. This may be exemplified by the work of the Devon and Cornwall Food Association, based in Stonehouse, to the residents of the Miles Mitchell estate in Eggbuckland.

Walkabout: Eggbuckland

This walkabout visited the Miles Mitchell Estate which consists entirely of residents over 55. Named after the architect who designed it, the Commissioners were immediately struck by the ‘village’ atmosphere of the estate, which provides social housing to around 180 residents.

- Community activities appeared to be well catered for and were centred around the village hall, which had received Big Lottery funding. This has enabled groups and individuals to utilise the hall as a community learning and meeting facility.
- Despite the absence of shops in the local area, access to food, for example was catered for through delivery services that supplied day to day basics such as milk, bread and eggs.
- A feeling of safety and inclusion was also noticeable, supported by a police presence in the area.



“The residents are well looked after within this small community by the trust and there is police presence which adds to their feeling of being safe. There have only been two burglaries in the last ten years. There is a feeling of belonging and people don’t want to move once they have obtained a property” Feedback from a Commissioner following a Walkabout in Eggbuckland

2. Community Activities

A number of respondents to both the Street and E-Surveys highlighted the breadth of volunteering and citizen engagement opportunities available across Plymouth as being positive. Several people specifically identified the strong sense of identity shared by Plymouth residents, both in terms of the city’s geography and its history, which has the ability to unite communities. However, it was noted that despite the number of opportunities available, residents still need to be willing to become involved to make them work.

Several small initiatives to build confidence and power to act at a grassroots level were praised for their role in encouraging residents to become involved in community activities. Examples included the Big Local and Star People Awards initiatives in Whittleigh, which are schemes that give local people the power to decide how they want to improve their area, and to support residents to put projects into action.

3. Approaches to Combating Abusive and Antisocial Behaviour

"I do a lot of volunteering at the church and various other places – there are lots of different volunteer schemes advertised. I think it's fair that they are trying to increase the amount of ways you can get involved if you want to, it gives you more choices" Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 55-64, Stoke Village



Those identifying elements of fairness under this sub-theme referred to feeling safe in their own home, or feeling confident that issues of abusive or antisocial behaviour are dealt with promptly by either the Police or Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's).



"The Police and PCSO's are good. They make me feel safe and people are friendly if I need help" Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 16-25, Crownhill

"The youth service is getting a lot better and its giving kids more to do, which is going to cut down on antisocial behaviour" Female Street Survey Respondent, Aged 26-34, Stoke

"After a long number of years, some landlords, the Local Authority and the Police are starting to take this matter seriously. Whether it is due to noise nuisance or behaviour on the streets, anti-social behaviour is decreasing due to the legal systems being used" E-Survey

Walkabout: Barne Barton

This walkabout focused on the issues raised around poor access to services including healthcare, transport and schooling.

- The sheer size of the estate and the high proportion of social housing meant there is a high demand for services which is not being met.
- A range of issues were observed including the lack of accessible healthcare such as a GP and transport in the local area, as well as the general lack of amenities.



Theme 3: Growing the Local Economy



“““

Employment is dominated by public sector employers with good working terms and conditions (local government, health, further and higher education, Ministry of Defence) but this employment base will be shrinking over the next few years. With no major business employers in the area, private sector jobs are largely confined to low quality, low-paid, part-time “flexible” jobs with poor prospects or security. Because of these trends, the city is becoming poorer



**Theme 3:
Growing the
Local Economy**



Summary of Key Findings

The top 3 most commonly identified areas of unfairness and fairness under Theme 3 Growing the Local Economy have been summarised below.

Top 3 Unfair	Parking	The most commonly mentioned area of unfairness under this theme was parking. In particular this related to the high cost and availability of parking in the city centre which was seen as a deterrent to shoppers and residents with a negative impact on businesses.
	Employment	Following feedback from across all Summer of Listening events, employment was the second most commonly identified area of unfairness under this theme. More specifically, this related to a lack of employment opportunities for young people aged under 25, barriers to successful engagement in apprenticeship schemes , and concern regarding the absence of major employers in Plymouth.
	Shopping	Concern around the existing shopping facilities was the third most frequently mentioned area of unfairness under this theme. For some, this related to the number of shops in the city centre that have closed , impacting on its lack of visual appeal; whilst others highlighted the lack of investment in the West End of the City Centre; and the large number of national chains at the expense of local shops .
Top 3 Fair	Shopping	Whilst nominated as a theme of unfairness, shopping facilities in Plymouth were also perceived by some to be positive, and were most commonly identified as a focus under Theme 3. More specifically, this related to the current mix of shops meeting local need , both in the city centre and selected city neighbourhoods.
	Parking Availability	Parking was the second most commonly identified area of fairness. A number of respondents felt that the parking charges are set at an acceptable level with an appropriate number of spaces . The Park and Ride facilities were also nominated as a positive provision.
	Employment and Skills	Opportunities for employment and skills development was the third most commonly mentioned area of fairness. Feedback from the E-Survey indicated the development of a range of schemes and initiatives to encourage Plymouth residents into employment as being positive; whilst the Skills and Business Select Committee underlined the support to ensure equal access to skills development.
Other Emerging Themes	In addition to the most commonly identified areas of unfairness listed above, feedback from the Select Committee on Local Procurement indicated some concern regarding local procurement , and the potential for the small businesses to have a more visible role in influencing city policy .	

Theme 3: Growing the Local Economy

What is Perceived as Unfair?

1. Parking

Parking was identified as the most commonly mentioned topic of unfairness under Theme 3. The perceived high cost of parking was viewed as a deterrent to both shoppers and businesses and was therefore classed as being unfair. Representatives from the Plymstock Military Families group and the Visually Impaired Bowls Club who gave their views also felt that the current level of parking charges at the hospital (military families), and around town, particularly on the Hoe next to the bowling green (Bowls Club) were too high. Parking issues were also raised by disabled people in terms of the lack of spaces and distance from facilities.



"Parking in the city is expensive. It leads to shops not being able to trade, and reduced employment" Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 65+, Mutley

2. Opportunities for Employment

Feedback from across the Summer of Listening events indicated a lack of employment opportunities for young people, with employers offering a limited number of opportunities to those aged under 25.

Whilst apprenticeships were highlighted as a potential route into employment for this group, the Skills and Business Select Committee highlighted significant barriers. These encompassed low participation from local employers; difficulties in gaining access to information held by the National Apprenticeship Service; the negative perceptions of apprenticeships held by young people, such as the associated low-levels of pay whilst training; and cuts to independent careers advice.

Some respondents to the Call for Evidence took a more medium-term view of employment opportunities in Plymouth, citing the absence of major employers as a concern.

3. Shopping Facilities that meet Local Need

A number of concerns were raised with regard to the look of the shopping area in Plymouth. For some, the prevalence of shops in the city centre that have closed down has contributed to its lack of visual appeal. A proportion of feedback also highlighted the disparity between the standard of, and investment in, retail in different parts of the city, with contrasts being observed particularly in relation to the retail offer in and around Drake Circus, and the Independent Quarter in the West End.

"Plymouth City Centre looks like a 'dump'. The whole West End area is unkempt and dirty, smelly and unappealing. Shops are boarded up and look tatty. Pavements are in need of a good scrub as are the empty retail units... More shops are closing than opening..." E-Survey



Reflecting on Plymouth's retail offer, another cause for concern was the current blend of retail outlets which, in some areas, was reported to have seen an increasing number of larger chain stores and supermarkets at the expense of smaller, independent retailers.

Other Emerging Themes of Unfairness

Feedback to the Select Committee meeting on local procurement indicated some concerns, particularly the need to openly and transparently advertise tender opportunities. For example, the Sell2Plymouth initiative, which is intended to promote buying goods and services from local companies, was felt by some to require improvement to more adequately cater for low cost contracts (under the value of £25k).

The Plymouth Federation of Small Business raised the need to have a more proactive approach to promoting and producing opportunities for SME's.

It was also felt by some attendees at the Select Committee that small businesses could have a more formal role in influencing changes to city policy, such as car parking, or through investigating alternative forms of financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

"What is fair about the East End of Plymouth being heavily invested in for new shops and promotions, yet the West End, known as the Independent Quarter, is left to 'rack and ruin'. Shops are empty and left derelict, they are not 'spruced up' unless they are in the East End, rents are too high. The Plymouth City Centre Company does not promote the West End sufficiently and therefore they are suffering terribly. Where is the fairness in this?" Individual Submission - Call for Evidence

"Drake Circus has killed the bottom end of town; lots of shops are closing down" Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 16-25, Royal Parade

"We need more local shops. There are too many high-end chain stores, especially in the Mall"; Female Street Survey Respondent, Aged 16-25, Mutley

"There are empty shops due to the cost of business rates. If the rates were lowered it might encourage more into the city centre" Female Street Survey Respondent, Aged 45-54, Mutley

What is Perceived as Fair?

1. Shopping Facilities that meet Local Need

Shopping facilities in Plymouth were viewed positively by a number of respondents to the Street Survey and E-Survey. For some, the current blend of shops in the city centre was identified as meeting their need, whilst others highlighted the availability of shops in the neighbourhood districts of Mutley and Crownhill.

“The shopping facilities are good in the local area, and they are easily accessible. Also, they have good service for disabled people, in terms of getting in the shops”

“The shopping facilities in Plymouth seem to be spread around quite well, as they are not just in the town centre but in the local communities as well” Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 55-64, Stoke Village

“The car park in Toys R Us is free for two hours, and that’s good for people to go into town as it makes it less expensive. It’s good for the shops down there too as it means people have to walk past them to get to the top of town, so more chances to trade” Male Street Survey Respondent, Aged 65+, Mutley



A smaller number of respondents also perceived that the city centre generally offered reasonable levels of accessibility for disabled people through, for example, the city centre Shopmobility scheme, and the availability of disabled parking bays. On balance, however, issues of unfairness with regard to accessibility for disabled people across the Summer of Listening events outweighed identified themes of fairness².

2. Parking Availability

For shoppers commuting into Plymouth City Centre, parking charges were perceived by some E-Survey and Street Survey respondents as being at an acceptable level, with an appropriate number of spaces provided. In relation to this, the Park and Ride service was identified as being a positive provision.

² Refer to Communities of Interest Case Study: 'Disabled People'

3. Opportunities for Employment and Skills Development

A number of respondents to the E-Survey identified the development of a range of schemes and initiatives to encourage Plymouth residents into employment. These included support for apprentices through City College, and the NEET³ Engagement Programme. The Skills and Business Select Committee further underlined the support in place locally to ensure that Plymouth residents have fair and equal access to skills development. For example, the Plymouth Advice Centre for Employment (PACE) works with unemployed adults to build skills and employability, and the Shekinah Mission to support the promotion and improvement of IT skills, addressing digital exclusion.

Walkabout: Stonehouse

The walkabout in Stonehouse covered a range of issues including the housing stock, the disparity between the gated communities and surrounding areas, the economic impact of businesses moving into The Millfields, and the challenges of Union Street.

- The commercial development in The Millfields was praised, especially with regards to increasing the number of businesses and employment brought into the area. This was felt to have encouraged inward investment which has resulted in benefits for the local community.
- Less praise was given to the lack of investment in Union Street. The dilapidated buildings were given specific mention, and despite the need for repairs on places such as the Palace Theatre, owners are unable to afford the repairs due to negative equity.



³ Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Communities of Interest

Case Studies

The Summer of Listening provided an opportunity to highlight the issues specific to minority groups or marginalised groups, whose voices might not normally be heard. Having gathered the views from a variety of organisations and individuals, the issues raised have been brought together in case studies. It is important to note that these highlight unfairness issues for a selection of groups in Plymouth, and therefore do not represent the views of all people or groups in the city. The case studies are based on the following groups:

- Disabled people;
- Military families;
- Older people;
- Young people.

Disabled People

Many people suggested that disabled people are one of the groups more likely to be affected by unfairness issues across the themes, particularly during difficult economic times.

Issues that were raised are listed below.

- **Parking** was one of the more frequently mentioned unfairness issues for disabled people in the sense that there are not enough spaces and those that are available are too far from services or facilities. One person mentioned they had organised a petition to address this issue but it had changed nothing.
- Another transport issue for disabled people and also frequently mentioned was the unfairness of having **bus passes** with restrictive times and that disabled people are turned away when **buses are full**.
- Difficulties with **access** in public spaces was raised by several people.

- The Street and E-Surveys commented that disabled people are likely to have additional problems getting **employment** and that there aren't enough suitable job opportunities for disabled people in Plymouth.
- Other less frequently cited issues were around the need to raise awareness of the circumstances of disabled people to reduce discrimination, a need to train mobility scooter users, and issues of loneliness. A few E-Survey respondents identified that appropriate housing stock for disabled people is inadequate.

“adults with learning disabilities, on buses discriminated against and less than sympathetic drivers”

““Disabled people probably have a hard time. I think they find it harder to get jobs and they haven't got good access to shopping facilities.”

“The loneliness and lack of inclusion suffered by the adults with a learning disability who live in our community is never addressed.”



Military Families

Military families were represented by at least two organisations in the Summer of Listening and were also referred to by individuals during the Street Surveys.



The issues which were identified as particularly unfair include:

- A **lack of consideration** for military families in Plymouth generally, when compared to other cities.
- Difficulties for military spouses in building a career and **securing employment** because of frequently moving to different cities.
- A **lack of clarity on the rules** surrounding when children can take their holidays, or not being able to take them during school term time, which means they may not see their father.
- Where environmental conditions are poor in military accommodation, there was **inconsistent feedback** experienced, as to whether responsibility lies with Plymouth City Council or the Ministry of Defence.
- Where there is a **health concern**, military families on a medical waiting list are supposed to stay in their position on the list when moving areas; however, in Plymouth this is not the case.
- **Support for young people** in military families is available but it's not always well thought out. For example, boarding school is funded but the uniform is not and difficult circumstances often aren't accommodated for. For these families that move around frequently, this incurs substantial costs.

Older People

The particular circumstances of older people were highlighted throughout the Surveys and Satellite Meetings. Issues raised included:

- Feeling that older age groups are **neglected generally** in Plymouth.
- **Digital exclusion** – information and deals are only available online which disadvantages elderly people. More paper based information would be helpful.
- Elderly people unable to leave the house due to being **afraid to go out**, or an inability to afford it, which can lead to a deterioration in health.
- There's a **lack of drop in groups and support** for older carers. They feel isolated and can't access information.
- A **lack of intergeneration contact** can lead to negative feelings towards older people.
- Many **unfairness issues around healthcare** were raised across the strands.
- Similar to those on low incomes, elderly people were felt to be **particularly vulnerable to rising costs** of living alongside cuts in pensions and benefits.



“Old people need more help especially when it comes to mobility and care areas, which links to loneliness and community activities.”

Young People

Unfairness issues for young people were expressed throughout the Surveys and Satellite Meetings. Issues focused on fewer employment opportunities, difficulties for those accessing social housing, a lack of meeting places and questionable standards of education.



The issues which were identified as particularly unfair include the following:

- One of the organisations reported that young people experienced **stress due to housing issues** that were unresolved for long periods. Another housing issue relevant to young people was a lack of a joint protocol between housing and children's social care for young people aged under 17.
- A **lack of appropriate temporary accommodation** for young people.
- Young people with **difficult circumstances**, such as young carers or those with learning disabilities, need additional support. They felt schools are unaware of the needs of young carers and young people with mental health issues.
- The Satellite Meetings noted a **lack of sociable spaces** or meeting places where young people can meet with their friends and that are considerate of different faiths.
- The results from the Surveys and the Satellite Meetings revealed that there is a perception of **fewer options of employment** for young people and **therefore limited prospects**. For example, it was suggested in the Street Survey that employers are less likely to employ people under 25.

- Young people were disappointed with **the quality of education** in one of the Satellite Meetings (echoed by some respondents to the Street Survey). Some felt children are leaving with insufficient knowledge and skills.
- Some in the Street Survey felt that young people are **perceived negatively**.

"There aren't enough opportunities to meet and be with other locals of my age. I hang around with school friends mostly, who are out of town"

"Sometimes it does seem like youngsters get labelled with being anti-social too often by older people, when all they are doing is socialising with their friends, so maybe people should be a little more lenient with them"

"Young people, all of them are educated but they can't get a job"

Commissioner Stories

Sharing Experiences from the Summer of Listening

Commissioners were fully involved with the Summer of Listening and much of what they saw and heard deeply affected them. They wanted to share some of their stories to illustrate that the commissioners experienced the Summer of Listening on a personal level. Here are some of their stories:

Access to Mental Health Services, Vulnerable People, and Experience of Stonehouse

Access to Mental Health Services: During a meeting of mental health service users, I was shocked to learn that some people said they had been waiting twelve months to access a counsellor. Having suffered from depression myself a number of years ago, I was lucky enough to be helped through counselling virtually straight away, so I understood the distress and difficulty that such a delay must be causing them and their families.

Vulnerable People: At this half way stage in Plymouth Fairness Commission's investigations and work, I cannot shake off the feeling that the most vulnerable people in our city are getting more and more vulnerable, day by day. It's a very sobering thought which keeps me awake at night sometimes.

Stonehouse Walkabout: I have lived and worked in Stonehouse since 2000, so I thought I knew the area pretty well. But, during the 3 hour Commissioners' walkabout there, I was astonished by the amount of information I picked up on activities and conditions there – some of it good, some of it bad. It's an area full of massive contrasts; it's seen big investment but is still full of potential. We have to get this inner city area right for all its residents.

Lesley Shorrocks, Chair, Plymouth Federation of Small Businesses

Experience of Abuse on Account of Learning Disabilities

One conversation that has really stuck in my mind was talking to a married couple from the Special Olympics team which meets at the YMCA. I will keep their names anonymous and will refer to them as Person 1 and Person 2. Both of them had learning disabilities and Person 2 had recently encountered abuse from members of the public which led to police involvement. They were obviously still shaken from the attack and it was still raw in their minds, but they felt like there wasn't enough being done to help them.

The Police had told them to call back if they needed any further help, which they had done, but they felt as though when authoritative voices hear that the person on the receiving end is disabled or has a form of learning disability, that they don't want to know. It seems that there is a sort of expectancy for the abuse and that nothing can be done. They did compare it to a racial assault, saying that if their race had been the issue, there would have been more done about it; although that is not to say that this is true, it is certainly how they felt.

You could tell that it was upsetting for both of them to sit down to us and talk about their feelings. Person 1 was getting incredibly worked up talking to us, relaying the experiences that they had in Plymouth and told us how desperate they are to move. Once they find the right type of accommodation elsewhere they are planning on leaving. We were told how people knock on their front door, wait for them to answer it, laugh at them and then run away. This behaviour is unacceptable and is really distressing for anyone to deal with, let alone for someone with a learning disability.

In closing the conversation, Person 1 said that he just wanted to gather everyone in one room, and let them all know how they feel. "I feel let down" is what he would tell everyone. He also stated that although there is a perception that things are getting better with regards to fairness and equality in Plymouth, through living here and experiencing it first hand, his view is that this is not the case and it needs to change.

Glynis Lidster, Centre Manager, Welcome Hall

Support for the Homeless

At 10 years old, a young man left Cornwall to live in Dublin with his father. At 16, he became involved in crime, and was kicked out of his father's house, who was resolute in not wanting him back. Looking for a fresh start, the young man chose to move to Plymouth where he had some family ties, but no one he could live with. His mother experiences severe and enduring mental health issues so living with her was not an option.

In mid-June 2013, ZAP (Zone Accommodation Project) referred the young man to the City's Intensive Support Team (IST) as he fell within their statutory duty of care for support. However, 9 days later he presented himself again at ZAP claiming not to have been contacted by IST and having slept rough on the Hoe for the previous 2 nights (whilst sleeping rough he also had his clothes and passport stolen).

The timescale from the individual initially presenting as homeless, to being accepted as a looked after young person, took in excess of three months, which isn't fair. During this period he was at times left unsupported by the statutory sector, left without access to money, and remained in bed and breakfast temporary accommodation for the duration. The young person stated during this period that he felt decisions were being made over his head, that he was being palmed off, and that he did not understand the processes he was going through. He also felt there was pressure being applied by the statutory sector to have him deported back to Ireland and that a decision had been made not to accept him into care.

Mike Jarman, Chief Executive, Plymouth Zone

The Impact of Poor Housing on Health

As part of the Summer of Listening events I shadowed a Senior Private Sector Housing Officer in the Council's Homes and Communities team on a visit to a tenant living in St Judes. As we were approaching I looked at the house and thought it is not habitable. The tenant was sleeping in a room on what was in effect a shelf, accessed by a loft ladder. However, he had fallen down a few times and now slept on the sofa. His one source of heating in the bed sit was an open fire, which has now been condemned, and he had no central heating. As a result he had ice on the inside of his windows which had caused hospital admissions due to respiratory problems.

We might see this as a story about housing but it's not. It's about the impact that poor housing has on physical health and mental health. Although he commented that living there gets him down, the tenant didn't want his landlord to evict him for making a fuss because he likes living in the area. Seeing that house was a real experience and I was quite shocked that people live in conditions like this.

The Renewals Officer was absolutely brilliant, having developed a real rapport with tenants, and a wealth of knowledge on how to advocate for these people. There is this expertise about what can make a difference and we as commissioners need to get this expertise. These people are victims and have no one really to advocate for them, therefore the role played by the Renewals Officer is invaluable.

Robert Nelder, Consultant in Public Health

Activities for those with Learning Disabilities

Through the work of the Fairness Commission we met John*, a carer for Tony who has severe learning disabilities. John visits Tony three times a week to take him out, providing Tony with a sense of variety whilst also affording Tony's family a break from their caring responsibilities.

In John's experience, finding activities to occupy Tony with for three full days a week can sometimes be challenging. When the weather is good, there are plenty of spaces in Plymouth for walking. However, John, in common with many other carers, finds that when the weather is poor, it is very difficult to find appropriate activities for Tony.

Tony loved visiting the Orbit Club up at Crown Hill once a week, which provided an opportunity for music, card games and Karaoke. However, since the Orbit Club has moved premises, visiting has become increasingly difficult. There are now a lot of steps that Tony has to negotiate and a fire exit that leads straight onto the car park which means that John has to watch Tony carefully for every second they are on the premises. John and Tony thought the lack of suitable activities in Plymouth was unfair. It is a real shame that on wet days there is very little that John can take Tony to that is affordable and appropriate for Tony's ability.

Ann Kinahan, Director, Plymouth Citizens Advice Bureau

*Names have been changed

Annex One: Organisations that Responded to the Initial Call for Evidence

Barefoot
Children's Commissioning Partnership
Devon and Cornwall Food Association
Devon and Cornwall Refugee Support
Homelessness Action Partnership
NotEDuk
Oasis Project
Out Youth Group
Plymouth and Devon Racial Equality
Council
Plymouth Association of Governors
Plymouth Community Homes
Plymouth Drake Foundation
Plymouth Federation of Small Businesses

Plymouth Green Party
Plymouth LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual
and Transgender) Archive Heritage Group
Plymouth Mental Health Network
Plymouth SeniorNet
Plymouth University
Plymouth Youth Cabinet
Pride in Plymouth
Southway Youth Centre
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of
Plymouth
The Eddystone Trust
The Zone
Your Child Your Voice Community Interest
Company
Zebra Collective

Annex Two: Organisations Attending Satellite Meetings

Access Plymouth
Age UK
Baha'i Community
Churches Together Network
BME Groups
Crownhill Memory Café (for people with dementia)
Cultural Kitchen – Refugees and Asylum Seekers
Highbury Trust (for people with learning disabilities)
Jewish Community
LGBT Community
Lone Parents
Looked After Children – Young Devon

Mental Health Network
Military Wives, Plymstock
MIND Mental Health Plymouth
Older Carers
Older People
Plymouth Area Disability Action Network
Plymouth Bowls Club for Visually Impaired
Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Piety (St. Judes Mosque)
Royal Marine / Navy Youth Forum
Shekinah Mission
The Zone
YMCA
Young Carers
ZAP Project (The Zone)

Annex Three: Organisations that Responded to the E-Survey

About Time	Plymouth and District Coarse Angling Club
All Stars Theatre Group (For adults with learning disabilities)	Plymouth Association of Primary Heads
Barefoot	Plymouth Chamber of Commerce
Beaumont Villa Surgery	Plymouth City Council (PCC)
British Red Cross	Plymouth Foodbank
City College Plymouth	Plymouth Guild
Claro Learning - Plymouth University campus	Plymouth Street Pastors
Dartline Security Systems Ltd	Plymouth Surf
Devon and Cornwall Furniture Reuse Project	Plymouth University
Devon and Cornwall Police	Plymstock Community Festival/Forum
Devonport High School for Boys	Pregnancy Crisis Care (Plymouth & SE Cornwall)
Fawcett Plymouth	Real Ideas Organisation (RIO)
Headway Plymouth	Salvation Army
Help for Heroes	Simply Counselling
Home-Start South Hams Plymouth and Tavistock	Soroptimist international of Plymouth and District
HOPE (Plymouth) Credit Union Ltd	South Asian Society
Horticultural Therapy Trust	St. Budeaux Community Association
Huntingtons Disease Association	Train Restoration Opportunities for Disabled
Lipson Co-operative Academy	University of St Mark & St John
Mind	Welcome Hall Ltd
National Trust	Wolseley Community Catering Company Ltd.
Notre Dame	Wolseley Community Economic Development Trust (Wolseley Trust)
Oasis Training	Yealmpstone Farm Primary School
Plymouth and District CFS/ME Group	

Annex Four: Plymouth Fairness Commissioners

Andy Boulting	Chief Superintendent, Devon and Cornwall Police
Ann Kinahan	Director, Plymouth Citizens Advice Bureau
Ann Pointon	Chair, PADAN (Plymouth Area Disability Action Network)
Chris Penberthy, Cllr	Cabinet Member for Co-operatives and Community Development
David Salter, Cllr Dr	Councillor
Glynis Lidster	Centre Manager, Welcome Hall
Ian Potts	Managing Director, Architects Design Group
Jo Higson	Training and Outreach Co-ordinator, Devon and Cornwall Refugee Council
Joanne Kaye	SW Regional Secretary, UNISON
Kevin Elliston, Prof	Deputy Director of Public Health
Lesley Shorrocks	Chair, Plymouth Federation of Small Businesses
Marc Gardiner	Director, Zebra Collective
Mark Bignell	Chief Executive, Hamoaze House
Mike Jarman	Chief Executive, Plymouth Zone
Paul Lacey	Music Leader, Plymouth Music Zone
Richard Stephenson, Prof	Plymouth University, Dean of the Faculty of Health/PVC/Prof of Rehabilitation, Faculty of Health, Education and Society
Robert Nelder	Consultant in Public Health
Sam Philpott, Father	Priest, St Peter's Church, Stonehouse
Sheila Snellgrove	Director, Barbican Theatre
Steve Baker	Principal, Lipson Cooperative Academy
Sue Shaw	Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods, Plymouth Community Homes
Suzi Leather, Dame	Chair of the Commission

Annex Five: Summer of Listening Timeline of Events

Date	Event Type	Target Attendees/ Area of Focus	Venue/ Location
8 August	Listening Event	Members of the public	Frankfort Gate
29 August	Satellite Meeting	Older People	Age UK, Elspeth Sitters House
29 August	Listening Event	Members of the public	PCH Summer Festival
3 September	Satellite Meeting	Jewish Community	Synagogue, Catherine Street
4 September	Satellite Meeting	Business Community	Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, Crunchy Breakfast
4 September	Satellite Meeting	Ex-offenders/homeless	Shekinah Mission, Bath Street
9 September	Select Committee	Financial Inclusion	Welcome Hall, Devonport
11 September	Satellite Meeting	Military Families	Military Spouses Group, Radford Family Centre
11 September	Satellite Meeting	Mental Health	MIND Group, Greenbank
11 September	Select Committee	Skills and Business	Engage, St Levans Road
13 September	Select Committee	Housing	Harewood House, Plympton
16 September	Satellite Meeting	Physical Impairment	Access Plymouth, Mayflower East Car Park
17 September	Satellite Meeting	Individuals and Families affected by Welfare Reform	Advice Plymouth, Ernest English House
17 September	Satellite Meeting	Homeless People/People at risk of becoming Homeless	Zap Housing Project (18-25s), The Zone
17 September	Select Committee	Food	Plymouth Guildhall
18 September	Satellite Meeting	Dementia	Crownhill Memory Café, Crownhill Methodist Church
19 September	Satellite Meeting	Learning Disabilities/Difficulties	Highbury Trust Orbit Club, Outland Road
20 September	Satellite Meeting	Asylum Seekers/Refugees	Cultural Kitchen, Sherwell United Church Hall
21 September	Satellite Meeting	Looked After Children	Young Devon Fun Day, Morley Youth Centre
24 September	Satellite Meeting	Christian Community	Churches Together Network Lunch, Pilgrim Church
24 September	Satellite Meeting	Young Carers	Plymouth Young Carers Group, Efford Youth Centre
25 September	Satellite Meeting	Older Carers	Carers Hub Group, Ernest English House
25 September	Satellite Meeting	Learning Disabilities/Difficulties	Special Olympics Group, Plymouth YMCA
26 September	Satellite Meeting	Young/Lone Parents	Ham Drive Nursery
26 September	Satellite Meeting	Military Families	Royal Navy/Royal Marines Youth Forum, Radford Family Centre
27 September	Satellite Meeting	Visual Impairment	Plymouth Bowls Club for Visually Impaired, Plymouth Hoe Bowling Green
27 September	Satellite Meeting	Islamic Community	St Judes Mosque (piety)
30 September	Satellite Meeting	Baha'i Community	Dale Gardens, Mutley

Date	Event Type	Target Attendees/ Area of Focus	Venue/ Location
1 October	Listening Event	Members of the public	Asda
1 October	Select Committee	Dementia	Welcome Hall, Devonport
2 October	Select Committee	Local Procurement	Baylis Suite, Tamar Science Park
6 October	Listening Event	Older People	Silver Sunday, Plymouth Guildhall
11 October	Satellite Meeting	Mental Health Conditions	Mental Health Network, Greenbank
14 October	Listening Event	LGBT Community	Plymouth Arts Centre
24 October	Satellite Meeting	Young Carers	Efford Youth Centre
28 October	Select Committee	Mental Health	Harewood House, Plympton
20 November	Listening Event	Ethnic Minority Groups	TBC



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